4911 Aurora Drive
Kensington, Maryland 20895
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Mr. Dave Reidy
Public Health Service
Health & Human Services
8300 Hough Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44103

Dear Dave:

I keep thinking about our conversation last week at the Del Ray Club.

If it will be helpful to the two houses you all have in Cleveland to affiliate with Oxford House, I'm sure we can issue charters to them. The enclosed manual outlines how Oxford Houses run and how to apply for charters. The requirements are simple: they are democratically-run and self-supporting, and anybody who drinks or uses drugs is ejected.

Affiliating with Oxford House might serve two purposes for your houses: It would provide a proven structure for operations if your situation is such that you no longer have a manager. And it would demonstrate to zoning authorities that there is no treatment occuring in the houses. Rather, it is cooperative group housing where residents can't drink or use drugs. I'll enclose a letter indicating how zoning authorities in Bethlehem, Pa. handled the situation. Also, the references to zoning on page-9 of the manual would be useful in any zoning action.

You mentioned having funding of $100,000-plus for the two houses. If the existing houses became self-supporting, that money could be used to lease other houses that could be self-supporting.

Perhaps 10 or more Oxford Houses could be opened over the next 18-months to two years with $100,000.

One person could be hired to locate suitable houses, lease them, locate potential residents, get the furniture (usually donated by AA members), get utilities turned on, etc.

Some of the money, say $50,000, could be set up as a revolving fund for seed money for new houses. In Washington it takes about $5,000 to get a house up and running. Last month, for instance, we opened a new house not far from the National Cathedral. We had to put up $2340 for the first month's rent and $2340 for a security deposit. I suspect houses can be leased for less in Cleveland, or about anywhere else. Even if it took $5,000 per house, you could open 10 houses with $50,000. Once in operation,

the houses can pay back the startup costs, and it can be used to open additional houses. The house we opened last month has already made its first repayment.

We have opened 12 houses in Washington since 1975 with existing houses kicking in the seed money. Had we ever had the luxury of a staff person and a ready revolving fund, we could have opened many more. As I mentioned, we are raising money for the first time.

The person coordinating the houses in Cleveland could also do some minimal checking at first to make sure that drinking isn't going on in the houses. In practice, once a house has thrown out its first person or two for drinking, it never wavers from that stance.

I've also thought about your comments and frustrations in trying to supply services to homeless alcoholics. There isn't enough money in the whole world for treatment and then supervised housing for all homeless alcoholics and drug addicts. Oxford House is the lowest cost potential solution I know of.

Since all research I've read indicates that if you sober up an alcoholic for a short time and he goes back on the street where he came from his chances are slim, maybe HHS or the Public Health Service might be interested in opening some Oxford Houses. I heard about the Surgeon General's conference on self-help in California last year and know it would fit with his philosophy.

We have been approached by the Department of Labor to tell them how to open some transitional houses for veterans who have been homeless, using Oxford House as a model. With Paul Molloy's help, I will be doing a study over the next few months and write operations manuals for them. Labor has apporoved funding for at least two Oxford House-type houses in ten cities.

Let us know what you want to do. I keep thinking about you because I know you played such a key role in getting the Alpha Houses open here and are used to getting things done. Paul and I have commented several times that we believe Oxford Houses are likely to start in clusters where there is a live wire person.

Paul and I will be delighted to visit Cleveland if we can be of any service for the existing houses or in starting new ones. If you needed a study done of the needs and potential for Oxford House-type houses in the area we could also do that.

I enjoyed running into you last week and hope it was fortuitous. My telephone is 301-9336251. Paul's is 301-5872916. If this prints, you'll be the recipient of the first letter from my new computer.

John O'Neill